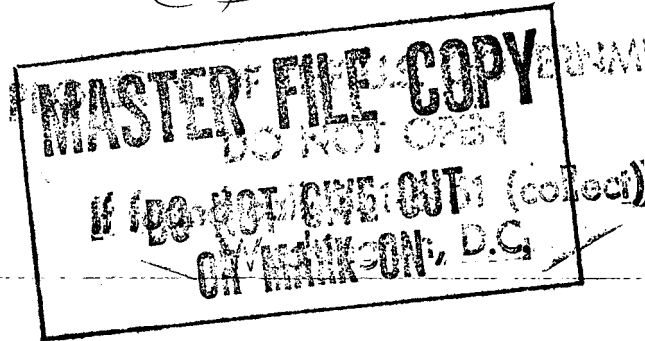




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# Horn of Africa: Continued Tensions in 1983

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An Intelligence Assessment

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ALA 83-10031C

March 1983

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# **Horn of Africa: Continued Tensions in 1983**

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**An Intelligence Assessment**

This assessment was prepared by [redacted]  
the Office of African and Latin American Analysis.  
Comments and queries are welcome and may be  
addressed to the Chief, West-East Africa Division,  
ALA, [redacted]

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This paper was coordinated with the Directorate of  
Operations and with the National Intelligence  
Council. [redacted]

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## Horn of Africa: Continued Tensions in 1983

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### Key Judgments

*Information available  
as of 15 February 1983  
was used in this report.*

The major countries of the Horn of Africa—Ethiopia and Somalia—face serious security problems that pose political challenges to their governments and problems for their superpower allies. Much of the region's trouble derives from Ethiopia's efforts to unify forcibly a multiethnic state under a Marxist political and economic system, and Somalia's irredentist struggle to regain Somali-inhabited territories controlled by Ethiopia. These regional conflicts and the threats they pose to US interests have been intensified by massive Soviet military aid to Ethiopia, which shares Moscow's hostility toward US influence in the region and toward the pro-Western regime in Somalia.

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We believe that the Soviets' substantial influence with the Ethiopian Government will remain undiminished over the next year as a result of shared ideological views, Moscow's desire to strengthen the Marxist regime in Addis Ababa, and Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu's continuing need for massive military aid to support the campaigns against Ethiopia's domestic insurgents and against Somalia. Moscow will continue to provide only limited economic aid, however, and this will cause continued tension in the relationship. Cuba's 9,000 to 11,000 troops appear likely to remain inactive in the disputed Ogaden region, serving as a reserve against a possible Somali attack.

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Libya, working through the tripartite alliance signed in 1981 with Ethiopia and South Yemen, is virtually certain in 1983 to continue its attempts to undermine moderate governments and US influence in the area. Although both Ethiopia and Libya have been disappointed with some aspects of the implementation of the 1981 accord, it has resulted in the provision of over \$224 million in Libyan aid to Ethiopia and joint subversive activities against Sudan and Somalia.

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Ethiopia's attacks and occupation in mid-1982 of Somali-controlled towns in the disputed border area—constituting the most recent military clashes between the two sides—had the effect of temporarily strengthening the domestic political position of Somali President Siad, who was bolstered by military assistance from the West, including the United States. Siad's hold on power prior to the attacks had been declining as a result of his diminished willingness and ability to manipulate tribal politics and because of the country's military weakness and economic difficulties. With Somalia unable to drive out the Ethiopians, we expect that Siad in 1983 will face renewed internal dissidence and a new deterioration of his position.

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ALA 83-10031C

March 1983

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In Ethiopia, Chairman Mengistu has used repressive policies to eliminate all organized opposition, and his position—barring assassination—seems secure over the coming year. The greatest challenge to the regime will come from the militarily, economically, and politically debilitating insurgencies in Eritrea and Tigray Provinces. Mengistu probably will continue efforts to organize a Communist party at home and is unlikely to reorient his foreign policy away from close relations with the Soviets despite his efforts to elicit increased economic assistance from Western Europe. [REDACTED]

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We believe US interests in the Horn during 1983 will be challenged by the most powerful state in the region, Ethiopia, and by its Soviet, Libyan, and Cuban backers. These governments will attempt to expand their own influence in the region, undermine support for US military access agreements in the area, and weaken or overturn the Governments of Somalia and Sudan. This, we believe, will result in continuing pleas from pro-Western states in the region for increased US military and economic aid. [REDACTED]

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**Contents**

	<i>Page</i>
Key Judgments	iii
Introduction	1
The Problem of Outside Involvement	1
Soviet Aid to Ethiopia	1
Cuban Involvement	4
Ethiopian Alliance With Libya	4
Ethiopia's Challenge to Regional Stability	7
Incursions Into Somalia	7
Continued Skirmishing Likely	9
Tension With Sudan	9
Impact on Domestic Politics of Key States	13
Siad's Position: A Temporary Improvement	13
Mengistu's Prospects: Intimidation Works	14
Outlook	17
Implications for the West	18
Western Europe in the Middle	18
Challenges to the United States	19

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## Horn of Africa: Continued Tensions in 1983

### Introduction

Tensions continue to run high in the Horn of Africa as a result of longstanding ethnic disputes accentuated by increased superpower competition. This competition, we believe, traces its roots in part to Soviet military assistance to Somalia during the 1960s and early 1970s and to Moscow's large-scale military aid, begun in 1976, to Ethiopia. Superpower competition has accelerated as US interest in the region—part of Washington's larger strategy for the defense of Western interests in the Persian Gulf area—has drawn Soviet efforts to destabilize pro-Western regimes there. These Soviet efforts, we believe, have taken the form of continuing aid to their most important regional client, Ethiopia, which in turn has cooperated with active Libyan subversive efforts against Mogadishu and Khartoum. Soviet aid to Ethiopia, in our view, also is directed at the internal stabilization of Addis Ababa's Marxist regime and at the consolidation of Soviet influence there.

Since 1976 the Soviets, according to US Embassy and other reporting, have provided Addis Ababa with \$2.6 billion of such assistance and committed themselves to extend an additional \$1.4 billion.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the US Embassy reports that 1,700 Soviet advisers are currently stationed in Ethiopia and that they continue to play an active role in assisting the Ethiopian Army in its campaigns against several internal insurgencies and its continuing occupation of two Somali border villages taken in June and July 1982.

Furthermore, Cuba maintains 9,000 to 11,000 troops in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia and at a military camp near Addis Ababa, according to Embassy reports. The Cubans have not participated actively in local conflicts since 1978, however, and we believe they currently serve as a strategic reserve against a renewed Somali invasion or an internally generated effort to overthrow the Mengistu regime; they also might, at some point, be transported to other places in Africa, such as Mozambique.

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### The Problem of Outside Involvement

#### Soviet Aid to Ethiopia

We believe that Ethiopia's alliance with the Soviet Union is firm because of Addis Ababa's requirement for continued outside military aid to deal with domestic insurgencies and Ethiopia's recognition that such aid is likely to be available only from Moscow. Soviet regional ambitions and certain shared ideological views also contribute to the overall stability of the two countries' occasionally contentious alliance.

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Since 1976, when the Soviets agreed to meet Ethiopia's military needs in an effort to replace the US presence, Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu has often publicly expressed his political affinity for Moscow. We believe he sees the Soviet Union as a model of the successful consolidation of a multiethnic empire under strong central government and of economic modernization and industrialization. Indeed, the Ethiopian Chairman's personal contacts with the Soviets predate his consolidation of power in 1977; he led the Ethiopian delegation to Moscow in 1976 that negotiated the original Soviet arms commitment to Addis Ababa.

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Figure 1. Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu Haile-Mariam meeting the late Soviet President Brezhnev in Moscow.

Sovfoto ©

The Soviets, in our view, continue to see Ethiopia as their most important Sub-Saharan African client and a place from which to assert regional influence. We believe this attitude stems from Ethiopia's political importance within Africa, its economic and military potential, and its location across the Red Sea from the Arabian peninsula. The Soviets also enjoy limited military access to Ethiopia:

The Soviets in the past have requested more extensive access to Ethiopian facilities, but the US Embassy reports they are not now pressing for it. We believe this may be in part because of clear Ethiopian sensitivities to a foreign military presence, as well as

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the Soviets' own concerns about the security situation in Eritrea Province, which encompasses Ethiopia's entire seacoast. Rather than immediately pursuing expanded access for their own military forces, the Soviets, in our view, would first prefer to consolidate their position in Ethiopia by helping the central government expand its control over the country and by increasing their influence at all levels of the government. In our view, this strategy is directed at the goal of a stable Ethiopian ally for the Soviet Union which would then be more amenable to serving as a base for Soviet activities in the region. [ ]

Moscow also shares regional political goals with Ethiopia and Libya, and we believe the Soviets have adopted a policy of arming these client states and helping them pursue these shared aims; the Soviets thus avoid potentially embarrassing direct involvement in efforts to destabilize pro-Western regimes. The Governments of Sudan and Somalia have told US Embassies in their capitals that they view subversive efforts directed against them by Ethiopia and Libya as part of Moscow's regional policies even in the absence of evidence of direct Soviet involvement in these schemes. [ ]

Despite the mutual advantages of the relationship for Moscow and Addis Ababa, it continues to exhibit strains that we believe stem largely from Ethiopian nationalism and Moscow's attempts to shape the political complexion of the regime. Embassy and press observers note that in personal relationships, cultural differences between Soviet and Ethiopian officials and military officers have led to frequent and acrimonious disputes, with both sides generally holding the competence and intelligence of the other in low regard. [ ]

Mengistu himself, despite his political affinity for Moscow, has proved to be a less than pliable client. [ ] he has consistently resisted

Soviet pressure to move quickly to form an Ethiopian Communist party. Much of his reluctance, we believe, may derive from his memory of the radical civilian parties that threatened the military regime during the power struggles following the 1974 revolution; Mengistu, in our view, is striving for absolute control over the party when it is finally created. Mengistu probably also is reluctant to allow the formation of what

could become a reservoir of alternative leaders lest Moscow eventually find itself tempted to support one against him. [ ]

Embassy reporting indicates the Ethiopian leader has also found the Soviets to be a convenient scapegoat for the failure of the 1982 anti-insurgent offensive in Eritrea Province. Embassy reports indicate that, although Mengistu has laid most of the blame on alleged Sudanese support for the rebels, Ethiopian military leaders also have registered complaints about the quality of Soviet equipment and advice. In our view, Soviet apprehensions regarding this tendency were one reason for the two-month visit to Eritrea by the Commander of the Soviet Ground Forces, Marshal Petrov, at the height of the offensive in the spring of 1982. Petrov, who, according to press accounts, played a major role in directing Ethiopia's successful counteroffensive against the Somali invasion of the Ogaden in 1978, appears to have recommended a reorganization of the Eritrean campaign after a careful study and may have suggested breaking off the campaign, which ended shortly after he left Ethiopia. [ ]

We believe these strains do not presage a breakdown or even a serious deterioration of the Soviet-Ethiopian alliance during 1983. Indeed, the tone of the public statements issued following Mengistu's visit to Moscow in October 1982 and the agreement signed at that time calling for close ties between the Soviet Communist Party and the commission set up to establish a Communist party in Ethiopia indicate that the two regimes remain close. Mengistu is the final arbiter of Ethiopian foreign and security policy, and, as long as he believes the Soviet connection is irreplaceable as a source of critical military aid, he is unlikely—in our view—to allow tensions in the relationship to flare out of control. [ ]

We believe that, from Moscow's point of view as well, good relations with Ethiopia are too valuable to risk by making an issue of the minor irritations produced by Addis Ababa's independent tendencies, and, in our view, the Soviets will remain committed to the Mengistu regime. Although the Soviets are not above

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occasional demonstrations of their own displeasure, they seem to recognize that Mengistu's basic commitment to the alliance is firm and that his untimely removal would precipitate political instability with an uncertain outcome.<sup>2</sup> [REDACTED]

#### **Cuban Involvement**

Cuba, in concert with the Soviets, continues to back Mengistu. Havana and Addis Ababa share many anti-Western foreign policy goals in the Nonaligned Movement. An estimated 9,000 to 11,000 Cuban troops and advisers remain in Ethiopia, primarily in the northern part of the Ogaden region where we believe they constitute a strategic reserve against the possibility of a major Somali thrust into Ethiopia similar to that during the 1977-78 Ogaden war. A small Cuban unit is stationed near Addis Ababa where it could come to Mengistu's aid quickly in case of an internal challenge to his rule. Cubans do not participate in the counterinsurgency campaigns in northern Ethiopia. In addition, approximately 1,000 Cuban civilian advisers are stationed throughout Ethiopia, working on several agricultural, medical, and small industrial projects. [REDACTED]

In view of Somalia's present military weakness, Ethiopia's currently fairly firm control of the Ogaden, and the prolonged inactivity of Cuban troops garrisoned in the northern Ogaden, we believe there is little military need for the continued large Cuban military presence in Ethiopia. In our judgment, most of the Cuban forces could be transferred to Cuba or elsewhere in Africa—for example, Mozambique—without damaging Cuban-Ethiopian relations. We do not see signs, however, that such a move from Ethiopia is currently being planned. [REDACTED]

#### **Ethiopian Alliance With Libya**

Another Ethiopian alliance that is hostile to Western interests is that with Libya. Ethiopia and Libya, in our view, diverge in political outlook, with the former being a self-proclaimed Marxist state and the latter deriving its policies from Libyan leader Qadhafi's brand of radical Islam. Thus, even as allies in the Aden Pact of August 1981, they are deeply mistrustful of each other. We believe, however, that they share a common fear of and hostility toward the United States and a mutual desire to topple the Somali and Sudanese regimes, which they view as collaborating with Washington. In addition, each sees a number of potential advantages in the friendship of the other, and they have thus formed a stable working alliance and are reluctant to let persistent differences get out of control. [REDACTED]

Moscow for several years has publicly urged closer cooperation among the Aden Pact's three members, Libya, Ethiopia, and South Yemen, and we suspect the Soviets played a supporting role in the formation of the Pact. These statements, other public pronouncements since the formation of the Pact, and the general congruence of Soviet and Aden Pact objectives in the Near East and East Africa lead us to believe that Moscow will closely monitor the Pact's activities, privately encourage the ironing out of occasional differences within the alliance, and push for still closer cooperation against Sudan and Somalia. [REDACTED]

The alliance's high point to date occurred during 1981 and early 1982. At that time, Libyan leader Qadhafi apparently believed that he had gained a valuable ally in his search for political prestige and military influence in Africa. [REDACTED]

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Figure 2  
Horn of Africa: Military Agreements



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[REDACTED]

In late 1981, however, the Libyans began to exhibit increased concern over the potential cost of the Pact, and Tripoli eventually lost interest in the deployment of Ethiopian troops to Libya following the return home in November 1981 of Libyan forces from Chad. We believe Qadhafi's back tracking was primarily caused by Libya's mounting economic problems brought on by the 1982 world oil glut.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] While Mengistu may never have believed Qadhafi would provide all the promised aid, we believe the Ethiopian leader probably reasoned that even a substantial part would help make up for Moscow's failure to provide significant economic aid. Mengistu also probably reasoned that Libyan funding and armament of joint subversive enterprises against Ethiopia's neighbors would relieve Addis Ababa of that financial and military burden.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We believe that Addis Ababa's desire to assure Qadhafi of its revolutionary credentials played a role in its threat to sever relations with Washington in November 1981 in response to the US Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force exercise Bright Star 1982.

[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

As a net result, we believe that while the Pact has proved to be less extensive than its signers may have originally hoped, it has developed into an increasingly firm agreement among its members to cooperate for common objectives.

[REDACTED]

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**Ethiopia's Challenge to Regional Stability****Incursions Into Somalia**

A major common objective of the Aden Pact allies is the overthrow of the regime of Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre. During 1982 Addis Ababa substantially accelerated this effort. [redacted]

[redacted] Ethiopian forces attacked the Somali-held border town of Balenbale in June.<sup>3</sup> Several other Somali border communities were shelled by the Ethiopians, and military camps near the border were hit by airstrikes and artillery. These attacks were followed in July by an incursion by Ethiopian forces and members of the Libyan-funded Somali Democratic Salvation Front in the vicinity of Goldogob in Somalia.<sup>4</sup> The attacking forces pushed well into Somalia along the road to the key town of Galcaio before being turned back. Ethiopian and Somali dissident forces continue, however, to occupy both Goldogob and Balenbale. [redacted]

In our view, Ethiopian Chairman Mengistu and his associates are motivated to mount such attacks by the historical animosities that divide Ethiopia and Somalia, as well as by a desire to avenge Siad's initially successful invasion of eastern Ethiopia in 1977, continued raids by Somali regular forces into the Ogaden, and Mogadishu's continued aid to ethnic Somali

insurgents inside Ethiopia. Somalia's 1977 invasion—eventually turned back by Ethiopian and newly arrived Cuban troops—was intended by Siad to pursue Mogadishu's longstanding claims to the ethnic Somali-inhabited Ogaden region while the Ethiopian military was still weak from purges and other excesses of the revolution. [redacted]

We believe the Ethiopians realize that Somalia's military forces have deteriorated to the extent that they are incapable of defending Somalia's long border and are unable to challenge Addis Ababa on its own soil. Our belief, however, based upon the statements of Somali officials, is that Siad remains committed to pursuing Somalia's old territorial claims. The Ethiopians probably fear that he will use his improving relations with the United States and other Western powers to obtain new weapons for use in another attempt to take the Ogaden. They are also aware of Somalia's continuing, but necessarily limited, support for the ethnic Somali guerrillas of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) who are harassing Ethiopian convoys and military patrols inside the Ogaden. [redacted]

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[redacted]

[redacted] Ethiopia may have seized upon a large raid by Somali-backed Ogaden insurgents near a Soviet oil exploratory project in the Ogaden in June 1982 to initiate plans to unseat President Siad. Indeed, military activity by Somali regulars and Ogadeni guerrillas had been increasing since early 1982, and the US Embassy reports that some of its Somali contacts believe that Balenbale was used as a staging base by the insurgents. We believe the ease with which Balenbale was taken may have been seen by Addis Ababa as confirmation of the weakness of the Somali Army, thus prompting an expansion of the fighting. [redacted]

<sup>4</sup> The Somali Democratic Salvation Front, an exile dissident group based in Ethiopia, boasts a military wing of approximately 3,500 fighters. Most of its membership is drawn from the Majertain clan, whose members resent the dominance of Somali politics by Siad's Marehan clan. As a result of its ethnic exclusivity and close identification with Addis Ababa, however, the SDSF enjoys little popular support within Somalia. The Front is ideologically ambiguous, although Washington's support for Siad has made the group violently anti-United States. It has repeatedly threatened to attack US personnel stationed in Somalia, but it has been unable to date to carry out these threats. In 1981 the group incorporated several pro-Soviet Marxists into its ruling council under pressure from the Ethiopians and Libyans. [redacted]

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Figure 3. Somali forces in the border region remain poorly armed and poorly organized.

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Subsequent attacks by the SDSF in the central sector of Somalia were turned back in July, according to press reports, and the Ethiopian incursions failed to set off mutinies within the Somali military. While we believe Addis Ababa may have been surprised by this resiliency on the part of the Siad regime in the wake of their attacks, in our view, Mengistu continues to believe that the Somali Government is unsteady. Addis Ababa probably recognizes its limited ability to

impose a government on Mogadishu. Nonetheless, in our judgment, Ethiopian officials believe that they can create enough chaos inside Somalia to render whatever government emerges incapable of actively pursuing its claims on the Ogaden for several years.

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**Continued Skirmishing Likely**

Judging from the deployments of their forces, which are widely dispersed through most of the Ogaden region, and their public statements, the Ethiopians and their Somali insurgent allies seem reluctant to incur the financial, political, and military expense of pushing deeper into Somalia. Beyond logistic considerations, we believe the Ethiopians probably reason that such a thrust also would belie their contention that the fighting in Somalia is a purely internal affair and that Ethiopian troops are not involved.

Despite recent shipments of Western equipment, including US-made M-47 tanks from Italy, Soviet-made T-54 tanks from Egypt, and armored personnel carriers mounted with TOW<sup>5</sup> antitank missiles from the United States, we judge that the Somali forces facing the Ethiopians at Balenbale and Goldogob are too poorly armed and organized to mount counterattacks with any assurance of success, at least during the first several months of 1983. Mogadishu is eager to project an active image, however, and may employ harassing raids and artillery barrages from time to time in the areas of the Ethiopian incursions while it plans major counterattacks. Although such a strategy probably is designed to bolster frontline morale, we believe that unsuccessful attacks might be counterproductive and result in unaffordable losses of equipment and troops. A less immediate danger noted by the US Embassy in Mogadishu is that a successful Somali counterattack at either Balenbale or Goldogob could unleash wider Ethiopian retaliatory attacks against which Mogadishu would have little defense.

We believe that, during 1983, Ethiopia, with Libyan aid, will adhere to its goal of overthrowing the Siad regime but that Addis Ababa will pursue this objective subtly to minimize expenses and international reaction. The Ethiopians—according to their own protests—view with consternation the sealoft and airlift of armor and other military equipment to Somalia

that followed last summer's border incursions. In our judgment, they would be reluctant to risk stimulating further Western and conservative Arab rearmament of Somali forces. Instead, we believe the Ethiopians and Libyans will continue to support the forces of the SDSF and the rival dissidents of the Somali National Movement.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Ethiopia probably looks upon Goldogob and Balenbale as platforms for launching further dissident attacks and, we believe, will try to involve the guerrillas as much as possible in the fighting.

We are skeptical regarding the prospects for a negotiated settlement of the dispute during 1983.

In our view, however, Siad and his immediate advisers rely too heavily on the political support of clans inhabiting the Ogaden to espouse openly such a view. The Ethiopians, for their part, now enjoy the military upper hand in the region and probably have little incentive to back off their longstanding demand for Somalia's unconditional recognition of Ethiopian sovereignty over the Ogaden.

**Tension With Sudan**

Traditionally tense Ethiopian-Sudanese relations were even more deeply strained during 1982.

<sup>6</sup> The Somali National Movement, a conservative Islamic group formally established in London in April 1981, enjoys some popular support among northern Somalis.

In early 1982 the SNM moved its headquarters to Ethiopia where it tried to gain Ethiopian and Libyan aid.

<sup>5</sup> Tube launched, optically tracked, wire guided.

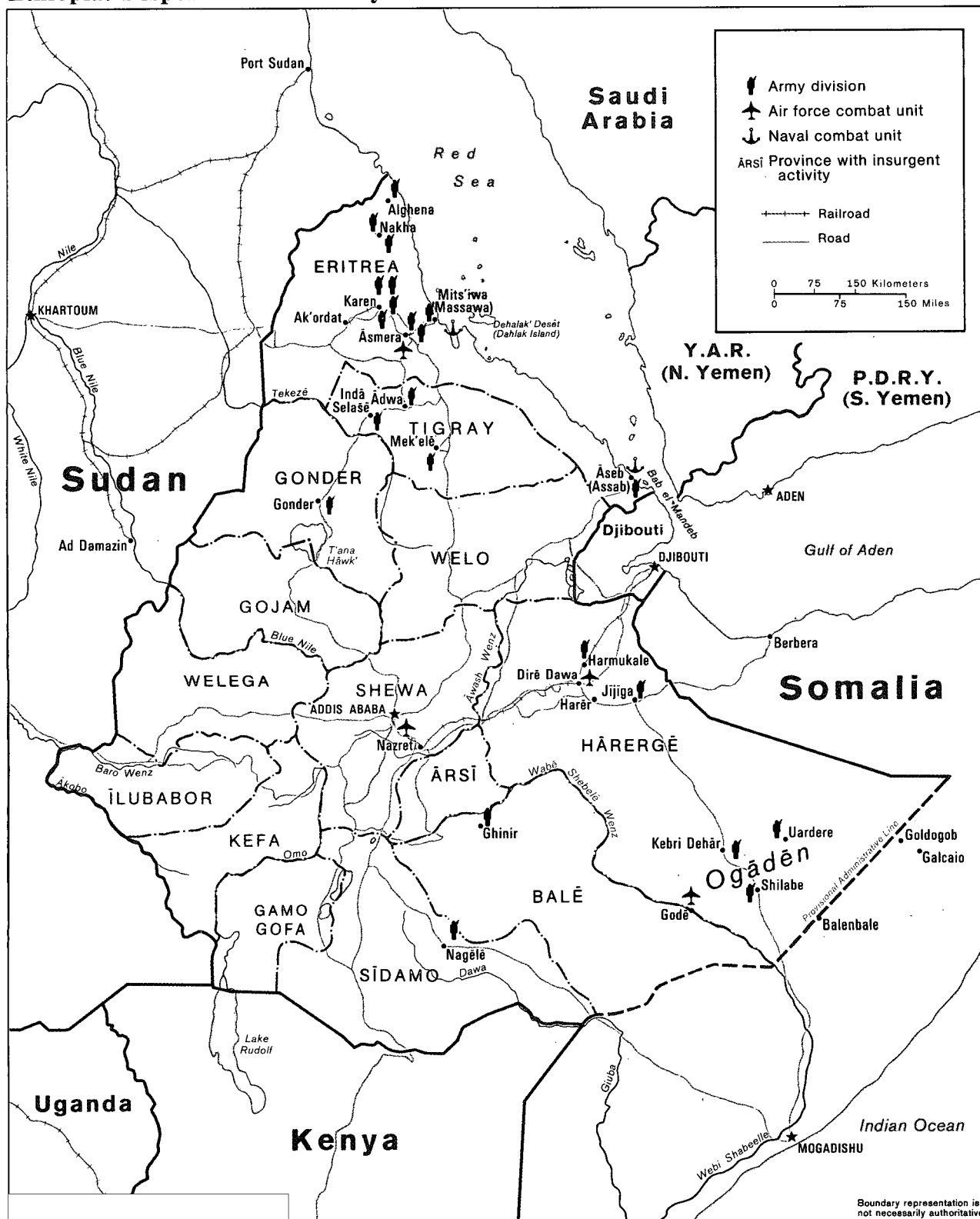
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**Figure 4**  
**Ethiopia: Disposition of Military Forces**



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[redacted] Longstanding ethnic tensions, in our view, have led Ethiopia and Sudan to support insurgent movements against each other sporadically over a period of several years:

- In the 1960s and early 1970s, Sudan, which espoused a generally leftist variant of Arab nationalism, openly supported the Eritrean insurgency against a pro-Western Ethiopia.
- Following a brief period of detente growing out of Emperor Haile Selassie's efforts to mediate Sudan's southern insurgency in 1972, the increasingly moderate government in Khartoum accused the Marxist successor regime in Addis Ababa of supporting a Libyan-sponsored coup attempt in 1976.
- In early 1977 Sudanese President Nimeiri publicly threatened to renew support for the Eritreans, and a series of subsequent border clashes raised the danger of full-scale warfare between Ethiopia and Sudan.
- Later in 1977 relations gradually improved and were cemented in 1980 when Nimeiri visited Addis Ababa.
- During 1981 and 1982, however, Ethiopian suspicions of continuing Sudanese support for the northern insurgencies led Addis Ababa, in our view, to agree to longstanding Libyan requests for cooperation in Tripoli's anti-Sudanese efforts. [redacted]

[redacted]  
Mengistu and other top Ethiopian officials ascribe their failure to suppress the northern rebellions to alleged Sudanese aid to the insurgents. Moscow has publicly sought to reinforce the belief among Ethiopian leaders that Washington is encouraging Khartoum to aid the insurgents in an effort to bring down the Addis Ababa regime. [redacted]

The US Embassy in Khartoum [redacted] make clear that Sudan does, in fact, harbor some of the guerrillas among its Ethiopian refugee population. Even when Khartoum attempted to restrict the activities of these rebels during the past year

or two in order to improve relations with Ethiopia, enhance its own security by lowering the level of violence among rival organizations, and encourage negotiations between Addis Ababa and the rebels, Embassy reporting indicates that it was unable to do so completely. The US Embassy in Khartoum notes, furthermore, that the Sudanese privately acknowledge their continuing hope that the "Eritrean card" represented by these exiled rebels can be used eventually as a bargaining chip against Ethiopia's support for Sudanese dissidents. [redacted]

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During 1982 Ethiopia, for its part, continued to publicize its efforts to forge a detente with Sudan, including a call for joint border patrols to cut guerrilla supply routes. These efforts, in our view, were motivated by a desire to encourage continued Sudanese restrictions on the exiled Eritreans and to discourage any Sudanese effort to countermand Addis Ababa's support of Sudanese dissidents by playing the "Eritrean card." [redacted]

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In reality, however, Mengistu's cooperation with Libya's anti-Sudanese campaign increased. [redacted]

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[redacted] In July, according to US Embassy sources, Khartoum confronted the Ethiopian Government with evidence of its anti-Nimeiri plotting and demanded an end to the schemes. Addis Ababa responded belligerently, accusing the Sudanese of supporting the Eritreans, but followed up with some publicly conciliatory gestures.

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We believe that during 1983 Ethiopia will continue to pursue a two-track policy in its effort to end real and imagined Sudanese aid to the northern rebels. Addis Ababa is likely to continue its publicly friendly overtures to Sudan and propose mutual cooperation

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against cross-border violence. But as Mengistu becomes increasingly frustrated by his failure to defeat the Eritreans and Tigreans, and, as his conviction grows that Nimeiri is responsible for his problems, these efforts will become more a matter of buying time than an effort at compromise. We believe Mengistu will use this time to mount an even more serious

effort, with continued Libyan participation, to overthrow Nimeiri. In our view, he is likely to support a series of guerrilla raids whose objectives will be economic disruption through attacks on industrial targets and possibly further efforts to assassinate the Sudanese President. [REDACTED]

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**Impact on Domestic Politics of Key States****Siad's Position: A Temporary Improvement**

We believe that recent events, including the 1982 military engagements with Ethiopia, have temporarily strengthened Siad's political position; over the long term, however, substantial reforms will be required to reestablish the regime's stability. [ ]

We believe Siad's current problems are traceable to the defeat of his Ogaden invasion in 1978 and his failure over a period of several years to keep tribal fences mended.<sup>7</sup> Since a coup attempt in 1978 by members of the Majertain clan—the dominant political force before Siad came to power—Siad has relied almost exclusively on his fellow Marehans, his mother's Ogaden clan, and personal proteges in governing the country. The Marehans particularly benefited by insinuating themselves throughout the nation's government and economic structures and by engaging in increasingly widespread and blatant corruption. [ ]

The US Embassy reports these trends have been deeply resented by Somalia's other clans, and at least one northern tribe resorted to rioting in early 1982 and during January 1983. Siad's harsh response, including the arrest of over 1,000 alleged antigovernment demonstrators, generated more dissidence and a series of desertions and defections by ethnic northern officials and military officers to Ethiopia and the dissident Somali National Movement. [ ]

Still, the US Embassy in Mogadishu reports that the erosion of Siad's position was temporarily arrested by his ability to attract aid from the United States, Italy, and Egypt in the wake of the Ethiopian and dissident incursions in the summer of 1982. Siad generated some nationalistic support by closely identifying many of his leading opponents with Ethiopia. In addition, the incursions apparently reawakened Siad to the necessity of rebuilding his political support as evidenced by several reportedly successful political trips to central and northern Somalia and some limited conciliatory gestures by the President to his critics. [ ]

<sup>7</sup> Although Somalia is one of Africa's few ethnically unified nations, its people are divided into six major tribes and numerous clans and subclans. [ ]



Figure 6. Somali President Mohamed Siad Barre [ ] UPI, ©

We believe, however, that Siad's basic problems will continue unabated unless he supplements his current political efforts with major internal political and economic reforms. The US Embassy reports he is unwilling to follow such a course because reforms could erode his personal style of rule. [ ]

With virtually no hope for a dramatic improvement in Somalia's battlefield fortunes against Ethiopia, we believe that the popular view of Siad's weakness will persist during the coming year and increase chances for his overthrow. It has already resulted in an escalation of tribal demands upon Siad, as the diverse clans seek to obtain as many concessions as possible when they feel Siad can least afford to resist. Furthermore, the US defense attache in Mogadishu [ ] report that poor equipment, poor living conditions, the strain of maintaining a constant alert status, and tribal tensions have undermined morale and triggered desertions. [ ]

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Moscow would be helpful in bringing Soviet leverage to bear on Ethiopia to reach a negotiated settlement of the Ogaden dispute. While Moscow might be tempted again to encourage a political solution to the problem, we believe this approach would ultimately founder on both Addis Ababa's and Mogadishu's refusal to compromise on the territorial question.

#### **Mengistu's Prospects: Intimidation Works**

In Addis Ababa, Mengistu has moved ruthlessly to make his position virtually unassailable, and we believe that, barring mishap or assassination, he will remain in control for the next several years.

Over the next year, we believe the most likely prospects for a coup will come from within the Army, perhaps by officers sympathetic to the Somali National Movement. Siad also is vulnerable to a palace coup by his own supporters trying to preempt externally induced change. In either event, such a new government would probably be preoccupied for several months negotiating a new tribal coalition. For a time this would distract attention from the Ogaden dispute and the Ethiopian military challenge, although any successor government would eventually renew efforts to remove the Ethiopians from the border areas they currently occupy.

In our view, these military goals would require continuing foreign assistance and would push a successor regime to seek links with a superpower. In the near term, this is likely to be the United States. We believe the present high level of Soviet military support for Ethiopia would preclude a successor government in Mogadishu from arranging an early rapprochement with Moscow. In addition, strong anti-Soviet sentiment based on strains during Somalia's close alliance with Moscow during the 1970s is widespread in the Army and government.

Over the long run, however, we believe a new regime, if disappointed by the level of US and Western aid, might seek an accommodation with Moscow. It could try to take advantage of strains in the Ethiopian-Soviet relationship to pursue a rapprochement with the Soviets in hopes of restoring the Soviet military aid program that existed in the early 1970s. Post-Siad leaders also might believe that their cooperation with

Since 1977 Mengistu has consolidated final decision-making authority in his hands and is now rarely, if ever, challenged in policy matters by his subordinates, according to US Embassy sources. Since the 1974 revolution, Mengistu has outmaneuvered, intimidated, or eliminated all significant internal opponents. Embassy reports indicate that other members of Ethiopia's leadership are either functionaries without independent power bases or military men who have learned to submerge their personal ambitions and are loyal to Mengistu.

Mengistu enjoys little popularity outside the government, political institutions, and the Army and is even hated in many quarters. Nonetheless, he continues to keep this opposition intimidated and quiescent; we believe that even military leaders who might be capable of marshaling sufficient force to challenge Mengistu have been well aware since the 1977 reign of terror of his willingness to respond brutally to political challenges. We believe that for this reason, as well as from fear of a repetition of the chaos that followed Haile Selassie's overthrow, Mengistu's opponents will continue during 1983 to be reluctant to mount a meaningful challenge to his rule. Embassy reports indicate Mengistu has made considerable efforts, including the use of political officers, to check on the loyalty of military personnel.

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Mengistu's occasional difficulties are thus insufficient, in our judgment, to unleash a new revolution. Embassy reporting indicates that elements of the Army are unhappy over the relationship with the Soviet Union and the protracted military struggles against the insurgents, but we believe that over the next year Mengistu will continue to stifle grumbling either through repression, personal persuasion, buying off the military with small pay raises, or a combination of these strategies. [ ]

We believe that the most likely cause of an early end to the Mengistu regime will be either the assassination of the chairman or an unforeseen accident. Persistent rumors of varying reliability transmitted by the US Embassy indicate that he is the target of frequent assassination attempts, most of which are acts of individuals motivated by the desire to revenge the loss of friends and relatives during the officially sanctioned Red Terror of 1977-78 rather than political efforts by organized groups. Mengistu's highly personalized rule leaves the country with no apparent successor, and he has ensured that there are no influential figures with enough power either to challenge him or to emerge as a dominant leader should he be removed from the scene. [ ]

Our assessment is that Mengistu's early departure would result in a widespread power struggle and score settling reminiscent of the chaos of 1974-77 from which no certain victor would readily emerge. We believe the military would play a critical role in such a struggle. Contending factions would probably be organized on both personal and ideological lines and represent a wide political spectrum. We believe the Soviet Union and its East European and Cuban allies, who have had five years to insinuate themselves into the political structure in Addis Ababa, would have some influence over the outcome of such a struggle. Their efforts would be backed if necessary by the 9,000 to 11,000 Cuban troops we estimate to be still stationed in Ethiopia. We thus believe that whatever group or individual emerges on top will almost certainly be guided by the recognition that the support of Moscow and Havana will remain critical to the pursuit of Ethiopia's various, continuing military struggles, especially in the likely event the Eritreans, Tigreans, and Somalis take advantage of any post-Mengistu chaos by intensifying operations. [ ]

**The Challenge in Eritrea.** Continuing regional insurgencies throughout Ethiopia constitute a potential threat to Mengistu's position and are an important factor behind his dependence upon Soviet military aid. Mengistu's effort to suppress these rebellions by military means—regardless of the political, military, and economic costs—remains the central aim of his domestic and foreign policies. [ ]

The most intractable of Ethiopia's insurgencies is based in Eritrea, where a seesaw conflict has been under way for over 20 years.<sup>8</sup> In February 1982 Addis Ababa launched the unsuccessful "Red Star" campaign. This campaign, [ ] is designed to combine:

- Major military operations aimed at cutting rebel supply lines across the Sudanese border and capturing remaining guerrilla concentrations such as the mountain stronghold of Nakfa.
- A reconstruction campaign directed toward building a provincial infrastructure adaptable for both economic and military uses. [ ]

Addis Ababa concentrated over 120,000 troops in the province, but the campaign has been a military disaster. [ ]

Mengistu believed the rebel stronghold of Nakfa could be taken in a matter of weeks and that this victory would quickly be followed by a series of sweeps in the region of the Sudanese border to pick up remaining guerrilla groups. In months of heavy fighting, however, government troops proved incapable of dislodging several thousand Eritrean defenders from the town. [ ]

<sup>8</sup> Eritrea is a former Italian colony that was federated with Ethiopia under a UN decision in 1950 and incorporated into the empire of then Emperor Haile Selassie in 1962. A low-level rebellion continued in the province throughout the 1960s, but it gained considerable ground in the wake of Ethiopia's chaotic revolution that saw the end of the monarchy in 1974. By 1977 Eritrean rebels controlled virtually all of the province. Moreover, the insurgency, which originally maintained close ties with Arab and other Islamic states, was radicalized as its most extreme Marxist faction gained the upper hand in internecine fighting. A central government offensive in 1978 forced the rebels to abandon most of Eritrea's cities and towns but did not crush them. In 1979 Addis Ababa tried again unsuccessfully to end the insurgency with yet another offensive. [ ]

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[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Addis Ababa has been raising new local militia forces in Eritrea to release regular Army units from security duty and reorganizing its troops with the objective of renewing the military offensive. This revival of the campaign, however, may be delayed by fighting in neighboring Tigray Province, which has increased recently, according to Embassy reporting. We believe the next phase of the Eritrea campaign will consist largely of sweep operations in northern and western Eritrea against both the guerrillas and their supply routes from Sudan. [REDACTED]

Despite the efforts of the government, we believe it is unlikely to defeat the insurgency by military means during 1983. Over the past 20 years, the insurgency has grown to command widespread support among the Eritreans. Open sources indicate that the largest rebel group, the EPLF,<sup>9</sup> is also the most self-reliant and therefore the most resistant to the current Ethiopian strategy. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] the core of the EPLF's fighters are highly motivated, while morale among Ethiopian troops in Eritrea, many of them conscripts from the more primitive and disaffected southern provinces, appears to be low. [REDACTED]

Neither is there, we believe, much prospect of a political settlement. While all the Eritrean movements support the goal of regional independence, the EPLF, according to its public statements, is the least inclined to compromise and the most confident of its eventual

<sup>9</sup> The Eritrean People's Liberation Front (EPLF) draws its support primarily from the Christian communities of Eritrea. Its estimated 20,000 to 24,000 fighters are largely self-sufficient, benefiting from captured Ethiopian weapons, the cooperation of the Eritrean populace, and sanctuary in Sudan. A second group, the Eritrean Liberation Front (ELF), is Muslim dominated and pro-Arab. It has about 5,000 armed members and has received funds and other aid—most of it by way of Sudan—from Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia, and other Arab states. A third group, the Eritrean Liberation Front/Popular Liberation Forces (ELF/PLF), with only a few hundred armed men, plays a minor political role but has no effective military capability. [REDACTED]

ability to defeat the central government. [REDACTED]

Ethiopian hints over the past few years of interest in negotiations with the rebels, we believe, have been designed to present a reasonable front to other governments and to sound out Eritrean willingness to end the fighting on Addis Ababa's terms rather than to actively reach a compromise. [REDACTED]

#### ***Other Regional Rebellions.*** [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] While Addis Ababa was preoccupied in Eritrea, the ethnically based Tigrean People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which claims to incorporate both Marxists and non-Marxists in its leadership and consists of around 8,000 guerrillas, slowly but steadily expanded its area of operations to cover more than half the province as well as the Tigrean-inhabited portions of two neighboring provinces. This development has added to the regime's problems in Eritrea. The government's principal supply line to Eritrea runs through Tigray, and rebels there frequently interdict military convoys. Probably for this reason, the Army shifted some 10,000 troops from Eritrea to the Tigray area in the final weeks of 1982, [REDACTED]

We believe the TPLF, which maintains close ties with both the EPLF and Sudan, enjoys popular support in Tigray Province. The Front has capitalized on traditional Tigrean dislike for the rival Amhara, who retain the political supremacy in Addis Ababa that

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they enjoyed under Haile Selassie. The TPLF's leaders claim that their policy of redistributing land in the areas it controls on the basis of private family ownership also has swelled the ranks of the Front's supporters. The TPLF's goals, as outlined in public statements, are less clear-cut than those of the Eritreans, however, and appear to shift between demands for full independence, greater regional autonomy, and the solution of provincial grievances. Its leadership currently advocates the formation of an Ethiopian federal government representing all ethnic groups. We believe a determined drive by the Ethiopian Army in the coming year might restrict TPLF military operations but is unlikely to end the insurgency. [ ]

Most observers agree, however, that the Tigreans are less hostile toward the central government than the Eritreans have become. We believe a more lenient administration of their province, the granting of greater internal and cultural autonomy, and a determined campaign of economic investment could ultimately reduce the rebellion to more manageable proportions. As with the Eritreans, however, the Mengistu regime shows no signs of willingness to compromise. [ ]

#### Outlook

Despite occasional and halfhearted peace feelers by the various combatants in the region, we do not expect a serious diminution in the level of conflict in the Horn of Africa during 1983. We expect Ethiopia to launch at least one new offensive aimed at suppressing the Tigrean and Eritrean rebellions and believe that Ethiopia will continue its effort to overthrow the Somali and Sudanese Governments. Addis Ababa probably will continue its reluctance to commit its own troops far beyond the immediate areas of its borders with those two countries. Its destabilization efforts are more likely to take the form of continued aid to dissident groups. [ ]

This high level of tension in the area, coupled with the key location of the Horn of Africa, ensures that the Horn will remain a focus of superpower competition in 1983 and for the foreseeable future. We believe

that the Soviet Union will devote considerable effort to consolidate its influence in Ethiopia. The Soviets clearly want to continue their naval access to Ethiopia's Dahlak Island to supplement their floating logistic support system in the northwest Indian Ocean. Their use of the Ethiopian facilities, together with access to Aden, contributes to their Indian Ocean squadron's ability to monitor US and Western naval movements in the region. [ ]

Most of the Soviet effort will consist of military aid, an area in which the Soviets already have demonstrated an unusual measure of generosity and efficiency, and continuing political pressure on the Mengistu regime to establish institutions, such as a Communist party, through which long-term Soviet influence can be ensured. Moscow may cautiously increase the level of this pressure prior to 1984, when large payments for Ethiopia's military debt, averaging over \$200 million per year, begin to come due. [ ]

In our judgment, Ethiopia, for its part, probably will concentrate its efforts over the next year on improving the capabilities and possibly further expanding its military forces in an effort to solve its complex regional problems by force. Since the military seized power in 1974, Ethiopia's armed forces have mushroomed from 45,000 to approximately 200,000 men, presently the largest and best equipped force in black Africa. [ ]

Most of Ethiopia's new troops probably will join existing units that are preoccupied with combating local rebellions, keeping pressure on Somalia, and in military-economic construction projects, but an expanded force could pose long-term dangers for Western interests. In his recent speeches, Mengistu has begun to paint himself and his regime as an important revolutionary force on the world stage. We believe that, should Ethiopia succeed over the next several

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[redacted]

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years in suppressing or easing some of its regional rebellions, it might be tempted to use some of its armed forces for intervention elsewhere in Africa. Addis Ababa might be even more receptive to such a move if it were accompanied by Soviet economic encouragement—such as promises of relief from the military debt. [redacted]

### Implications for the West

#### Western Europe in the Middle

West European nations led by Italy, the former colonial ruler of parts of Ethiopia and Somalia, have tried to maintain a balanced approach to the disputes in the Horn of Africa in the hope of facilitating detente between the antagonists and encouraging an Ethiopian realignment away from the Soviets. These governments have achieved a rough equivalence in economic aid to both countries, valued in 1980 at \$68.8 million for Ethiopia and \$76.5 million for Somalia, according to OECD figures. [redacted]

Mogadishu, which trades primarily with Saudi Arabia and Italy, has been consistently eager to expand its trade and aid relations with the West and the conservative Arab states, particularly with regard to funding for a dam construction project. Somalia's dearth of known economic resources and the general European pessimism regarding its economic prospects, as reported to US Embassies, remain, in our view, major stumbling blocks to expanded economic ties. [redacted]

Ethiopia, for its part, attempted during 1982 to maintain and expand economic links with the West, but was unwilling to make significant political concessions on matters such as the expansion of the Western diplomatic presence in Addis Ababa or a reduction of tensions with Somalia and Sudan in exchange. In conversations with US diplomatic personnel, many Ethiopian leaders claim to recognize that the country's hopes for expanding trade and outside economic aid, and thus for long-term economic development, remain with the West rather than the USSR. The United States alone purchases nearly a third of Ethiopia's exports, and the West, including the United States, has provided Addis Ababa with \$770 million in foreign aid since the revolution in 1974. In

the same conversations, these officials also claim to believe that maintaining reasonably good ties with the West provides them with significant flexibility in their dealings with Moscow. We believe the Ethiopians see this as enhancing their ability to extract concessions from the Soviets on matters such as the rescheduling of their military debt, where their efforts to date have been unsuccessful. [redacted]

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As a result, Ethiopia accelerated efforts during 1982 to strengthen ties with several West European states, including Italy and France, and with Japan and to gain more aid from these sources. The Ethiopians' approach has generally consisted of assurances to each potential benefactor of Addis Ababa's long-term interest in working closely with it and the West in general—including the implication that Ethiopia may eventually move away from Moscow. An Ethiopian Foreign Ministry official revealed recently that Addis Ababa is settling compensation claims by foreign corporations for assets nationalized after the revolution on the basis of which of the corporations' home governments are most likely to provide substantial aid. For example, the US Embassy in Addis Ababa reports that Ethiopia agreed in 1982 to settle all Italian compensation claims for \$6.5 million in exchange for increased Italian aid commitments totaling \$190 million. The Embassy believes that similar settlements during 1982 of outstanding Dutch and West German claims were motivated by similar hopes, as yet unrealized. [redacted]

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Based on previous behavior, we believe Ethiopia will continue efforts to strengthen relations with several Western nations, particularly Italy and France, during the coming year. Addis Ababa's concentration on these two governments is based, in our view, on its hope to take advantage of Rome's desire to establish a special relationship with Ethiopia and Paris's current policy of increasing aid to leftist Third World regimes in the hope of prying them away from dependence upon Moscow. Ethiopia has shown a persistent belief that its interests are best served by as balanced a foreign policy as possible within the context of a close alliance with the Soviet Union and a firm commitment to Marxist ideology. [redacted]

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**Challenges to the United States**

Moscow is eager to undermine Western defense plans for the Persian Gulf area and to weaken Western influence in the Indian Ocean. One means of achieving this appears to be Soviet encouragement of Somali dissident groups in the hope that demonstrations of Mogadishu's political instability will discourage Washington from committing itself to Somalia's present regime and the use of its military facilities. Ethiopia, for its part, believes the US presence strengthens its regional foes and is thus inherently hostile to Addis Ababa. In view of common Ethiopian and Soviet interests, Washington is likely to find its friends and political influence in the Horn of Africa region challenged by Moscow and Addis Ababa for the foreseeable future, with the challenge occasionally taking on military or paramilitary dimensions. [ ]

Mengistu apparently does not hold much hope of significantly improved relations with the United States in the near future. He keeps the US official presence in Addis Ababa small, and, as reflected in US Embassy reports, issues protests on the occasion of US military exercises in the region and deliveries of US military equipment to Somalia. In our view, the Ethiopians probably do not wish to sever ties with Washington completely, due to their general reluctance to burn diplomatic bridges with any nation. Their selective courting of West European nations is, we believe, intended in part to bring European pressure on Washington to moderate what Addis Ababa sees as US hostility to its regime and to limit US aid to Somalia. [ ]

The threat to Western interests and to pro-Western states in the area will inevitably result in persistent pleas from Somalia—and from other pro-Western states such as Kenya and Djibouti—for increased military and economic aid. The Somalis have already indicated that they will seek a range of Western weaponry, such as tanks, military aircraft, antiaircraft weapons, and armored personnel carriers during 1983. [ ]

These pleas are likely to continue to receive support from other states on the periphery of the Horn of Africa, such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia, which view with alarm both Ethiopia's growing military potential and its ties to Moscow. These states and others in the area understand, we believe, that persistent instability and conflict in the Horn offer the Soviet Union one of its best opportunities for increased political penetration and influence in the Near East and Africa. [ ]

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